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Creating a Home Sanctuary

Learn how to create healing space from the designer who turned pain into an opportunity to share peace.

As I tried to build a beautiful life, I didn't know about the fault lines that ran beneath until everything collapsed around me, unearthing so much beauty — a treasure that I could not have found any other way.

My daughter had always been a handful. She came into this world with everything from ADHD to learning difficulties to food sensitivities.

Whirling with surprisingly destructive energy, my sweet girl needed constant supervision just to keep her out of harm's way and to protect the world around her. Her father and I spent the first 10 years of her life trying every treatment imaginable. Then, her seizures began — full on, grand mal seizures — further adding to her list of health challenges.

As I began to work frantically with her doctors, a so-called minor

correction in the economy rapidly became the opening rumbles of the Great Recession. The housing market faltered suddenly, my thriving design business was significantly less-than-thriving.

And, over the course of these events, my marriage unraveled at the core.

But that wasn't all, life was saving one more surprise for me: Chloe's special needs school

Perhaps nothing brings to mind relaxation more than lounging in a hammock, all while staying in the comfort and safety of your own home, like Chloe and her mother, Lisa Kahn-Allen.

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terminated her enrollment and recommended that she be institutionalized. I reeled in astonishment and disbelief. I tried to find my equilibrium as I wondered how on earth this could be the best thing for my daughter, for my family.

No one's life is without challenge, but trying to find a solution for Chloe, be a mother to my son, keep a semblance of my life together through a divorce and keep my business alive, became overwhelming. I was losing ground.

I have no magic formula to share. I can only write that one morning, after months of struggling, I let go of my last illusion of any sort of control over the circumstances of my life. I realized that I could only control how I would respond. And it was then that something utterly magical happened.

I was walking my dogs before dawn and had just rounded the corner to see the sunrise beginning to glow. A breeze swirled around me and lifted my hair, and the word

"sanctuary" whispered in my mind. It captivated my imagination, and I found myself wondering what this luminous word could mean to my life and my work.

Sanctuary, I realized, was at the very heart of my interior design business, and was the very thing that my children and I needed: a place to heal, to regroup, to begin again.

I began to experiment by creating a sanctuary space for each of us. I transformed our home and my

Charge your office or creative space with crystals and other elements to raise the energy.





Sanctuary Strategies

Are you ready to create a sanctuary for yourself? Based on research and experimentation, here are my strategies to create that place of peace around you, to inspire peace within:

1 Claim a space that's just for you to use as your sanctuary. It can be big; it can be small; but it has to be yours. Mine is a corner of our great room. One of my clients has hers at the end of her living room sofa.

2 Straighten up! It's hard to find peace in the midst of a big mess.

3 Relax, you can't get this wrong. Explore and be abundant in your thinking and planning. Your sanctuary is for you, so don't worry about what other people might think of your space or what you put into it. I put a hammock in mine, so there's a place to swing, relax and just be.

4 Set an intention to use your sanctuary to heal, to refresh your spirit, to stretch your creative muscles — whatever feels correct to you right now.

5 Connect with nature and bring it right into your space. The natural world heals us and brings us back to ourselves. Don't have a window to look out? Invest in a house plant or put up a picture of a beautiful tree.

6 Light a candle. Flickering flames are magical.

7 Put on some soothing music. They say it soothes even the savage beast. Maybe it can even soothe you!

8 Allow yourself to be creative, to relax, to decompress. This is your time, your space, your chance to fill your vessel and nurture yourself. This is not selfish. Only when we care for ourselves can we truly be of use to those around us.

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office into laboratories of sanctuary, trying everything I could think of, from paint colors to layouts — anything else to create an environment that would nurture and support not only our bodies, but our spirits as well. And, as I created peace around me, I found it magically inspired peace within me.

Sanctuary was my response to the circumstances life had brought. It is the jewel that was unearthed by the upheaval around me.

Time in my sanctuary brought another truth: my daughter's path is one that only she can travel. My striving to "fix" her was actually holding her back, by keeping me

from recognizing the gift that she is in my life. This discovery was a deep change in perspective. And, because of that, I could appreciate the opportunities that followed.

I learned of a new grant-funded program at David Lawrence Center that specializes in helping kids like Chloe. That program led us to Able Academy, a school that could not be more perfect for Chloe had it been custom-made for her. This became Chloe's sanctuary, a place for her to process her own experiences and emotions, regroup and present to the world the very best version of herself. And my home sanctuary gave me the chance to do the same.

Creating sanctuary is part of my work in the world. Not only a tool to survive, sanctuary can help us thrive. It's more than a sacred space around us; it's a mindset and an approach to life — one that has led me to feel more grounded, more creative and more balanced. I don't know what challenges await our family. But together, in our sanctuary spaces, we are ready. 🌸

Lisa Kahn-Allen, an interior designer of Naples, creates spaces that nurture us physically, emotionally and spiritually. She creates sanctuaries: peaceful spaces of beauty, order, creativity and light.

A young person's room of their own can become a sanctuary, not just for sleeping safely and soundly, but also for self-expression.

